

VZCZCXRO2681
RR RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW
DE RUEHCI #0153 1590444
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 080444Z JUN 09
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2379
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA 0001
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2924

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000153

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS
STATE PASS TO USAID
HHS PASS TO OGHA (KULIKOWSKI/CUMMINGS)
STATE FOR OES/PCI, OES/IHB AND SCA/INS
STATE FOR STAS AND AIAG (REED-ROWE)
HHS FOR NIH/FIC (GLASS/MAMPILLY/HANDLEY)
HHS FOR FDA (LUMPKIN/VALDEZ)
HHS FOR CDC (BLOUNT/COX)
USDA FOR APHIS (FLEMING/BURLESON)
USDA FOR FAS (RIKER/BEAN)
NEW DELHI FOR FAS/APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAGR SENV CASC PGOV AMED KFLU IN BD
SUBJECT: FRESH AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK IN WEST BENGAL

¶1. (SBU) On May 27, the GOI's central Ministry of Agriculture confirmed a new outbreak of avian influenza among poultry at Hemtabad in the North Dinajpur district of West Bengal. Hemtabad is located about 490 KM north of Kolkata and 20 KM from the border with Bangladesh. Contacts in West Bengal's state Animal Resources Development (ARD) Department told PolFSN that they sent samples collected from Hemtabad to the GOI's High Security Animal Disease Laboratory, which confirmed the H5N1 strain of the virus. Government officials started culling on May 29 and as of May 31 approximately 25,000 chickens had been culled. ARD completed culling and sanitization on June 2.

¶2. (SBU) ARD contacts confirmed media reports that people resisted attempts to cull chickens in a few villages. According to the ARD Department, this was to protest the fact that government officials were not paying compensation at the time the villagers were handing over their poultry. According to the ARD, villagers started to cooperate after officials started making spot payment of Rs. 50 (USD 1) per layer and Rs 40 (USD 0.8) per broiler. ARD contacts pointed out that in the past, H5N1 has always been detected in the cooler months between November and March.

Comment

¶3. (SBU) GOWB officials cannot explain why the latest outbreak has occurred in warm weather and are concerned that more resources will need to be devoted to avian influenza response. Another factor they cannot explain is the low mortality rates (20 chickens dying out of 1,200 in 72 hours in backyard poultries). Despite these anomalies, the state response seems to be in line with extraordinary precautions associated with standardized H5N1 containment measures.

PAYNE